

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2661

To prioritize educating and training for existing and new environmental health professionals.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 19, 2021

Mrs. LAWRENCE (for herself, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, and Mr. COHEN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Education and Labor, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To prioritize educating and training for existing and new environmental health professionals.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*

2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Environmental Health

5 Workforce Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds as follows:

1 (1) The environmental health workforce is vital
2 to protecting the health and safety of the public.

3 (2) For years, State and local governmental
4 public health agencies have reported substantial
5 workforce losses and other challenges to the environ-
6 mental health workforce.

7 (3) According to the Association of State and
8 Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the Na-
9 tional Association of County and City Health Offi-
10 cials (NACCHO), more than 50,600 State and local
11 environmental health workforce jobs have been lost
12 since 2008. This represents approximately 22 per-
13 cent of the total State and local environmental
14 health workforce.

15 (4) In the coming years, the retiring Baby
16 Boomer Generation will lead to a further decrease in
17 the environmental health workforce.

18 (5) According to the National Environmental
19 Health Association, more than 67 percent of Tribal
20 environmental health programs, 64 percent of State
21 environmental health programs, and 60 percent of
22 local environmental health programs report insuffi-
23 cient staffing capacity to respond to new issues pre-
24 sented by the COVID–19 pandemic. Industry work-

1 ers also reported insufficient access to training and
2 high levels of burnout.

(6) Currently, only 27 States require a credential for environmental health workers that is an impartial, third-party endorsement of an individual's professional knowledge and experience.

(7) Educating and training existing and new environmental health professionals should be a national public health goal.

10 SEC. 3. MODEL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR
11 CREDENTIALING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
12 WORKERS.

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the
14 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and
15 Human Services, in coordination with appropriate na-
16 tional professional organizations, Federal, State, local,
17 and tribal governmental agencies, and private-sector and
18 nongovernmental entities, shall develop model standards
19 and guidelines for credentialing environmental health
20 workers.

(b) PROVISION OF STANDARDS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall provide to State, local, and tribal governments—

(2) technical assistance in credentialing environmental health workers.

3 SEC. 4. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—To ensure that programs and ac-
6 tivities (including education, training, and payment pro-
7 grams) of the Department of Health and Human Services
8 for developing the environmental health workforce meet
9 national needs, the Secretary of Health and Human Serv-
10 ices shall develop a comprehensive and coordinated plan
11 for such programs and activities that—

17 (2) identifies and communicates to stakeholders
18 any gaps between existing programs and activities
19 and future environmental health workforce needs
20 identified in workforce projections of the Health Re-
21 sources and Services Administration;

(3) identifies actions needed to address such identified gaps; and

1 (4) identifies any additional statutory authority
2 that is needed by the Department to implement such
3 identified actions.

4 (b) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 2
5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Sec-
6 retary of Health and Human Services shall submit to the
7 Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of
8 the Senate, and to the Committees on Energy and Com-
9 merce and Education and Labor of the House of Rep-
10 resentatives, the plan developed under subsection (a).

11 **SEC. 5. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOP-**

12 **MENT REPORT.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the
14 date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General
15 of the United States shall examine and identify best prac-
16 tices in 6 States (as described in subsection (b)) related
17 to training and credentialing requirements for environ-
18 mental health workers and submit to the Committee on
19 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and
20 the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House
21 of Representatives a report that includes information con-
22 cerning—

23 (1) types of environmental health workers em-
24 ployed at State, local, and city health departments
25 and independent environmental health agencies;

(2) educational backgrounds of environmental health workers;

(4) State requirements for continuing education
for environmental health workers;

(6) how frequently any exam required to qualify environmental health workers is updated and reviewed to ensure that the exam is consistent with current law.

(b) SELECTION OF STATES.—The report described in subsection (a) shall be based upon the examination of such best practices with respect to 3 States that have credentialing requirements for environmental health workers (such as Maryland, Ohio, and Washington) and 3 States that do not have such requirements (such as Indiana, Iowa, and Pennsylvania).

23 SEC. 6. PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS.

24 Section 455(m) of the Higher Education Act of 1965
25 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(m)) is amended in paragraph (3)(B)—

1 (1) in clause (i), by striking “or” at the end;
2 (2) in clause (ii), by striking the period at the
3 end and inserting “; or”; and
4 (3) by adding at the end the following:
5 “(iii) a full-time job as an environ-
6 mental health worker (as defined in section
7 7 of the Environmental Health Workforce
8 Act of 2021) who is accredited, certified,
9 or licensed in accordance with applicable
10 law.”.

11 **SEC. 7. DEFINITION.**

12 In this Act, the terms “environmental health worker”
13 and “environmental health workforce” refer to public
14 health workers who investigate and assess hazardous envi-
15 ronmental agents in various environmental settings and
16 develop, promote, and enforce guidelines, policies, and
17 interventions to control such hazards.

